"When the well is dry, we know the worth of water."

- Benjamin Franklin

Make Every Drop Count

In Your Home

University of Nebraska Lincoln

4 Ways To Reduce Water

MAINTAIN

Fix leaks and dripping faucets. Leaks can account for 14% to 25% of all indoor water use.

CHANGE

Change the way water is used in the home.

EQUIP

Purchase water reducing equipment and appliances.

THINK

Develop creative water conserving practices that are safe and sanitary.

Where to Start?

Start with the largest water users. The toilet, shower/bath, and clothes washer account for two-thirds of the water used in an average household.

Rank	Item	% of Total Water Used
1	Toilet	27%
2	Clothes Washer	22%
3	Shower	17%
4	Faucets	16%

Toilets

• About 20% of toilets leak. Consumers can lose 200 or more gallons of water a day from a leaky toilet. A toilet that leaks 22 gallons/day means 8000 gallons per year of wasted water and an unnecessary expense.

• Put a few drops of food dye in the tank. If after 15 minutes, color appears in the bowl, you have a leak that should be repaired. Typically, the toilet flapper needs replacement or the water level adjusted.

• A toilet installed prior to 1993 may use up to 8 gallons of water per flush. New toilets use 1.6 gallons per flush. Pressure and vacuum assisted and jet action toilets were designed to improve waste removal. Dual flush toilets use 0.8 and 1.6 gallons per flush. If your present drain system blocks often, select a toilet rated high for "drain carrying."

• Toilet dams, 1.6 gallon flappers, or water-filled plastic containers can be installed in older toilet tanks but reduced flow can affect flushing. About 3 gallons of water may be needed in the tank to flush properly. Avoid bricks that crumble and affect operation.

Clothes Washer

• Adjust water levels to the laundry load size and soil. Typically, full loads use less total water.

• Horizontal axis (usually front loading) clothes washers are more water conserving, using about 1/3 as much water as vertical axis (usually top loading) machines. In addition, new features are making some top loaders more water efficient.

• Look for the EnergyStar® label and compare the amount of water used for same tub capacity. Some washers sense the load size and soil of water and fabric and adjust the water level. High-pressure rinses to spray clothes during the rinse cycle reduce water consumption. Adjustable water level settings allow you to choose the level for the load.

Showers

• Older showers can use up to 6 to 8 gallons of water per minute (gpm) fully opened. As of 1994, new shower heads use no more than 2.5 gpm.

• Take short showers. Showers with water-conserving showerheads use less than 2.5 gpm while baths may use 30 to 50 gallons of water. A quick shower usually draws less water than a bath.

Faucets

• A leaky faucet can waste 10 to 20 gallons or more a day and damage materials. Faucet repairs may be as simple as changing an inexpensive washer or O-ring.

• Faucet aerators restrict the water going through the faucet by about 50%, adding air to make the flow appear the same. Faucet aerators with flow rates of 1.5 gpm or lower (1/2 - 1 gpm) are available for a few dollars.

Other Ways to Reduce Water Use

• Wash patio furniture, cars, plant containers, waste baskets and other items near or on the lawn to reuse the water. Use an environmentally safe mild cleaner - avoid strong cleaners that may damage plants.

• Use brooms instead of a hose to clean patio, decks, sidewalks and driveways.

• Use a rinse basin or sprayer for rinsing hand washed dishes or items instead of running water.

• Reduce toilet flushes by not using them as waste paper baskets.

• On-demand water softeners use less water than the traditional water softeners by responding to actual water use and water hardness rather than a timed schedule.

• Check for leaks by turning off all water taps. Record the water meter reading. Compare reading 3 to 4 hours later.

Every drop counts ... Drops add up

Drops Per Minute	Gallons Per Month
60	190 to 260

Drought

Droughts are a normal part of life in the Great Plains and for Nebraska. Many droughts are short-term and may only affect small areas, but multiple-year droughts like the Dust Bowl of the 1930s are relatively common as well. In 2002, Nebraska experienced its third driest year on record. The state lost an estimated $1.2 billion from crop production, and many communities experienced the negative impacts of drought.

Mountain snows in Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana that provide water and fill reservoirs along the Platte and Missouri Rivers have been low for several years. Lake McConaughy could reach its lowest level since it first reached peak storage in 1952. In southwestern Nebraska, flows in the Republican River continue to set record lows. Rains may provide some relief for the state, but it is more than likely that water-related drought impacts across Nebraska will continue into the near, and possibly distant future.

For more information . . .

• Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services Regulation and Licensure 402-471-2541
http://www.hhs.state.ne.us/enh/pws/conindex.htm

• University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Offices www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/

• U.S. Geological Service Water Science for Schools - youth
http://ga.water.usgs.gov/edu/sc4.html

• EPA Water Saver Home and Water For Kids
www.epa.gov/water/water_efficiency.html

• American Water Resources AssociationWaterWiser:
www.waterwiser.org

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Nebraska Department of Health & Human Services Regulation and Licensure
Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality
National Drought Mitigation Center
Nebraska Department of Natural Resources
Nebraska League of Municipalities
Nebraska Rural Water Association
Nebraska Well Drillers Association
UNL Conservation and Survey Division

See the companion materials entitled "Make Every Drop Count On Your Yard" for more water saving ideas.